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In the market for a semi-auto built just for women? The L4S Sporting is your answer.

BY HOLLY A. HEYSER
I think I’ve gotten over the shock of having a gun manufacturer that builds a shotgun specifically for women. But I still have to pinch myself just a bit to accept that we actually get more than one choice.

Compare a women’s shotgun to a men’s shotgun and the differences are much more subtle, but arguably more essential. Shotgun fit isn’t about looking good — it’s about shooting well.

Fabarm introduced a new sporting gun to its Syren lineup this year: the semi-automatic L4S, which takes place alongside Fabarm’s other women’s semi-auto sporting-clays gun: the XLR5 Sporting.

The 12-gauge L4S is designed to handle like a double, but with the obvious benefits of a semi-auto. The S stands for “slender,” which applies to the forend and the gun’s weight, 10 ounces lighter than the XLR5. It could also apply to the price: $1,895 for right-handed and $2,080 for lefties, $205 less than the XLR5.

The stock dimensions are the same as the XLR5’s, which is to say designed for the average woman: shorter length of pull than men’s guns, a higher comb, and a steeper pitch to
keep recoil from jabbing that toe into our breasts.

But there are key cosmetic differences. The rose pattern carved into the grip and etched into the receiver of the XLR5 have been replaced with the Syren logo “S wings” carved into the base of the grip and discreet purple accents: the forend cap, the cocking handle and the carrier latch button.

I liked the roses better. But in this case, Syren is mirroring the red accents on the men’s Fabarm L4S, and the purple is straight out of the Syren logo, so it makes sense. And really, those accents are all about warning men not to pick up your gun — more on that point later.

To test this gun, I put 100 rounds through it at the Camanche Hills Hunting Preserve & Sporting Clays in Ione, California, and 300 rounds at the Rancho Cordova, California-based Cordova Shooting Center, which will have closed before this magazine rolls off the press.

I also patterned the L4S at 20 and 30 yards with the included improved cylinder and modified five EXIS HP™ Competition Choke Tubes, using Winchester Super Target and Rio’s new Vintage 1896 paper-hulled shells.

### WHAT STOOD OUT

**Overall:** It was my final skeet shoot where I really got my groove with this gun. The 30-inch barrel appeared to keep swinging all by itself after every shot. It made me feel like a ballerina, when in fact I am awkward, gangly and utterly lacking in grace and natural hand-eye coordination. Even the rookie shooters who were with me that day noticed my spectacular follow-through. I felt like a princess. A gun-toting princess.

It was literally the best skeet I’ve ever shot, and I pre-mounted only for Doubles, which I do at every station. The gun came up easily, which is fascinating because I’m taller than the average-height woman this gun is made for. It made me really sad that I had to give the L4S back to Fabarm right before a fundraising tournament where I will now have to use my hunting shotgun.

**Function:** The gun loads easily, ejects shells perfectly and never malfunctioned during testing.

**Appearance:** Syren never fails to produce a beautiful shotgun. The Turkish walnut stock is gorgeous, the receiver has graceful lines and there are two types of etching in the forend and grip — traditional diamond/cross-hatch pattern and a granular texture — which looks nice. Personally, I would not be averse to shooting an ugly shotgun — I am all about function. That said, I enjoy having a gun that’s nice to look at, and who doesn’t enjoy people oohing and ahhing over her firearm?

**Carrier latch button:** The button is oversized and located on the left side of the receiver for the right-handed model, which I really liked. It’s more ergonomic and less awkward than a right-side button because it places your hand in a natural cupping position without getting your thumb in the way of the cocking handle.

**Chokes:** The improved cylinder and modified chokes patterned cleanly and consistently with both types of shells that I used. They never came loose during shooting.

**Adjusting drop and cast:** I shoot left-handed because the authors report that the barrel “appeared to keep swinging all by itself after every shot.”

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**Adjusting drop and cast:** I shoot left-handed because I’m cross-dominant, so I’ve become pretty fearless about adjusting drop and cast myself. It is ridiculously easy on this gun: You remove the butt pad, unscrew the retaining nut, pull off the stock, reverse the spacer between the stock and receiver, then put it all back together.

**One note:** If you shoot lefty, you might be tempted to buy the right-handed gun, save $185, then adjust the cast for left-handed shooting. If you do that, you will lose the benefit of having the...
palm swell where you need it in the grip, rather than on the opposite side of the gun. **Cost:** This is not a cheap gun, but it’s Syren’s most affordable sporting gun at $1,895 for right-handed, $2,080 for lefty. I looked up the price on the men’s Fabarm L4S, and I was pleasantly surprised to see it’s the same. Women are used to paying more for things made for us — even deodorant! — so I appreciated the gender parity on this pricing.

It would be nice if left- and right-handed models cost the same, though. Given the prevalence of cross-dominance in women, there are an awful lot of women who shoot left-handed — close to half in my experience working with new shooters who are taught to shoot their dominant eye, not forced to adapt to a right-handed world. **Cleaning:** It’s a gas gun, so it’s dirty — fact of life. The only thing I found difficult was removing the cocking handle, which is a constant problem in semi-autos for me. In the L4S, you’re supposed to be able to pry the handle out with the ring of an empty shot shell, which didn’t work for me. Part of it might be that I have arthritis in my hands. Part of it might be that the gun manufacturers haven’t figured out a handle that removes easily for everyone. This is important: When a part is hard to remove, you’re going to clean it less often.

**The manual:** I believe in reading instructions, so I really appreciate a good manual. In general, I found the L4S manual lucid, and at five pages, brief — perfect for an attention-deficient society that can barely bring itself to glance at word-free quick-start guides.

There was one exception: When I went to adjust drop and cast, I discovered the manual did not indicate what size nut is used on the stock bolt.

On other Italian guns I’ve adjusted, it’s been 13mm. On the Syren, my 13mm socket didn’t work. So, I hit the local big-box hardware store for a set that would cover my bases.

None of them worked, because — inexplicably — the set did not include a 16mm socket, which turned out to be the size I needed. Obviously, it was not my day.

Fortunately, this is my only quibble with the instructions.

"Now you know how it feels, pal," I mumbled. He needed the pink. **We** sure don’t.

The first day I shot the L4S, I invited my friend Vy to come along and give it a try. She asked if her husband Jakob could come along, and I said of course. He surprised me when he asked if he could shoot the L4S a few times, and his response was so deeply gratifying that I wrote it down: "Shoot- ing this gun makes me realize how awful it must be to shoot a gun that’s not matched to your size," he said. "It’s awkward. It’s humbling. It’s freakish."

Most women adapt to shooting guns that weren’t made for them, and when they pick up a Syren, they experience that “where have you been all my life?” feeling — the exact opposite of what Jakob had felt.

So huge kudos to Syren on its 12th shotgun made for women. The fact that Fabarm builds shotguns for us is a wonderful thing. The fact that the L4S is a really nice gun makes it even better. **CTN**